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Santa Cruz Trash Bins to Carry Baby-Dumping Warning

Tue Aug 20, 9:38 PM ET

Tony Russomanno

A box of stickers sits in the Santa Cruz District Attorney's office, waiting to be deployed.

The message on them is aimed at new mothers. It says, "Don't throw your baby away." The stickers will be placed on Santa Cruz garbage dumpsters.

"That dumpster sticker can be the last line of defense for a young baby that's about to be placed into that dumpster," said Christine McGuire, Assistant District Attorney.

The stickers will be distributed by Joanne De La Cruz as part of her sentence for smothering her newborn infant in a UC Santa Cruz dorm room and then putting the dead baby in a dumpster. The intent is to publicize a new state law that allows mothers to hand their babies over to a hospital emergency room within 72 hours of birth, no questions asked.

"It passed because hundreds of babies have been abandoned by their mothers immediately upon birth in dumpsters and in a number of other unsafe places," McGuire said.

The stickers will shock some people.

"It would make my stomach clench," said Santa Cruz resident Pearl Brunk. "It's a horrible thing."

But two doctors scoffed at the sticker idea.

"If they're nuts enough to throw away their baby, that ain't going to change their mind," said Dr. Laura Banks, a neurologist.

Emergency room doctor Chris Johnson said, "It happens often enough to where all the county dumpsters need to have those on them, and they're going to dissuade people?"

For now, only dumpsters in the cities of Santa Cruz and perhaps Watsonville will carry the stickers, as they have their own municipal garbage collection service. Waste Management, the company that controls dumpsters everywhere else in the county, refused to cooperate as a matter of policy.

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